

A 4175 de 24
CALL¹L³
TO
SEPARATION
FROM THE
CHURCH
OF
SCOTLAND:
WITH

A Short ADDRESS to the MODERN DEISTS.

By THOMAS BLACK.

DAN. xii. 4, 10. *Many shall run to and fro, and Knowledge shall be increased. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried: but the Wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the Wicked shall understand, but the Wise shall understand.*

GLASGOW:

Printed for ROBERT MORISON, Bookseller in *Perth*,
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IT is a very just Observation of an eminent Author, That the Reason, why Men afford Credit to so many Cheats in Physick, and even put their Lives in their Hands, appears to be no other but this; That there are such Things in the World as true and real Medicines, approved by the Knowledge and Experience of the wisest Physicians. For were there really no such Things, and were all Distempers indeed incurable, no Person would be so extravagant, as to think himself Master of these Remedies, much less would so many others be deluded by his Pretensions.

In the same Manner, and with the like Evidence, he concludes, That there could never have been so many pretended Miracles and Revelations in the World, but on Account of others which were real, nor so many false Religions, but with Regard to one which is true. And therefore, instead of arguing from the Number of false Religions in the World, against the

TRUE RELIGION, we ought, on the contrary, to infer it from these, and to assure ourselves, that Forgery and Falsehood are the Shadows which have ever followed **TRUTH** and **REALITY**.

We might inquire then, How comes it to pass, that such Multitudes are imposed upon by **CHEATS** in **RELIGION**, where it is of the utmost Importance not to be deceived? And it is impossible to account for this without the Assistance of Revelation; which plainly declares, That our Apostasy from **GOD**, was entirely owing to our First-Parents giving Ear to the grand Impostor **SATAN**. And ever since, that desperate implacable Foe to God and Men hath had no small Share in all the Delusions, false Religions, and lying Miracles, whereby Men have been in all Ages, and still are in this Age, deceived and cheated to their own Destruction. Nevertheless the Foundation of God standeth sure, having this Seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: And let every one that nameth the **NAME** of **CHRIST** depart from Iniquity.

All Sects of Men, professing Christianity in this Nation, if they are not juggling with God and Men, must believe their own Religion to be the best. Now it is most evident, both from the Writings and Discourses of each Party, that the one Sect denies what the other asserts to be true. It is as clear then as Sun-shine, that all of them cannot be right. And, if we believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, who cannot lie, and of as great Authority, as if we were hearing God speaking these Words, by an audible Voice from Heaven; we must likewise see, that there is but one Religion pleasing to God. This Religion is revealed in the most plain and simple Words, suited to the Capacities and Understandings of the Vulgar, as well as the Learned, yet in such Words as are full of Beauty, Force, and Majesty, worthy of God to reveal, and worthy of all Acceptation of all Sorts of Men, High and Low, Rich and Poor, Learned and

and Unlearned, Young and Old, in all States and Circumstances of Life. And I persuade myself, that the great Reason why Men reject Revelation, is, because it comes from God; for there is no human Composure can compare with it, even for Stile, and Instruction in the History of the World.

The most ignorant among Mankind know what it is to give Credit to one another: Yea, do not each of us take innumerable Things upon Trust? Thus I believe there was such a Man as Julius Cæsar, and that he is the Author of the Book called Cæsar's Commentaries; that he was murdered in the Senate, &c. though these Facts happened more than Seventeen hundred Years before I was born. I believe there are such Cities in the World as Rome, Constantinople, &c. though I never was there, nor perhaps ever shall.

The Scriptures demand our Credit to Facts; they assure us, That all Mankind are born in Sin, under the Power of Satan; That we are Enemies to God; That our Hearts are deceitful above all Things, and desperately wicked; That our best Works, and most splendid Appearances, in our natural State, are displeasing to God; That we are more vile and abominable in the Sight of God, than a dead rotten Carcase can be in our Sight; That these Things, which procure us the high Esteem of the World are an Abomination in the Sight of God. All this doth the Word of the God of TRUTH positively assert concerning our Condition, and commands our Belief of it, upon Pain of eternal Damnation. And it is most certain, the more we examine into our own Hearts, and the more we observe Mankind, the more glaring Proofs we shall have of the TRUTH of the WORD of God in this Description of human Nature.

Now this being our miserable Condition, doth it discover Wisdom or Prudence to be indifferent, easy and unconcerned about it? Would it not be much more excusable in a Criminal, who had been sentenced

ced to be broke on the Wheel for some notorious Crime, and who had but an Hour to live, with a Promise of Pardon, if he should follow some easy Methods for obtaining it, if the foresaid Criminal should, after all, neglect and despise the Methods proposed to him for getting his Sentence reversed, and spend that Time allowed him, in drinking, gaming, or some trifling Diversion? Every thinking Man would, without Hesitation, pronounce him a Fool or Mad-man. Yet I assert, if the Criminal had nothing to fear but a cruel Death, his Conduct would be far more excusable, than the Behaviour of the Bulk of Mankind, whose whole Employment is just an uninterrupted Course of Business and Diversion, to keep them from looking in to themselves. Hence it is, we project so many Schemes, when we have nothing at present to divert us; because the Mind must be employed about something; and we would rather endure any Hardship, or be employed in the most trifling, foolish, yea pernicious Amusement, than take a serious View of our own Case, which is a Sight we cannot bear.

But the desperate Madness of such a Course cannot possibly be painted to the Life. Every Man must be convinced, at first View, that there are but three possible States in which he himself can be after this Life is at an End; either a State of eternal Happiness, or a State of eternal Torment, or a State of eternal Nothing. The Scripture is plain, that there are only the two first. Now, betwixt us and one of these States, nothing intervenes but the frail Thread of Life, the Preservation of which to any one who hath but a tolerable Knowledge of the Anatomy of a human Body, must appear to be a continued Miracle, or, to speak more properly, the Effect of a DIVINE Power and Wisdom.

Is it not then evident, that a careless Indifference about the State we are to be in for ever, is beyond the Power of Words to express in its odious and heinously
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aggravated Light? The Word of GOD, indeed, accounts for this Conduct in a very easy Manner; If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them that believe not; lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of GOD, should shine unto them.

It is the Devil's great Business, to divert our Minds from a View of ourselves; to make us easy and quiet in the Commission of Sin; to make us imagine, that ill as we are, there is still some Good about us; to make us compare ourselves with the World about us. Thus Men reason in their Hearts, If these Men who pretend to be religious are as bad as ourselves, what have we to fear? It is true, we take our Bottle perhaps a little too freely; so do they: we cannot bear an Injury without shewing our Resentment; as little can they. We own we love Money, and would willingly be in better Circumstances; but where is the Harm of all this? Do not we observe the same Things in good and godly Men? Do not our Teachers grasp at Riches as much as we, tho' sometimes they let a Fling at the immoderate Love of them? We cannot deny but some Part of our Life has not been altogether regular with respect to Women; but let us see which of our Neighbours can cast the first Stone at us, as innocent in Thought, Word or Deed. We do Harm to no Body, and attend Ordinances; and it will fare ill with many more, if we miss Heaven.

Thus Men reason themselves into Hell and DAMNATION; and these are the Methods by which Men quiet their Consciences in the committing Drunkenness, Revenge, Covetousness, Pride, and Uncleaness; and thus they excuse the Omission of the contrary Duties.

And until God, by his holy Spirit, awaken Men to a Sense of their Danger, and let them see these Sins, as done in Contempt of his Authority, and out of
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real Hatred and Enmity at him, Men may preach as much, and as fervently, as they please; the World will be the World still. And it is a certain Truth, That the Lives of the Clergy in Scotland, as well as other Places, have done a great Deal more Mischief than ever their Sermons did Good.

Where then is the Cure for all these Evils? The Word of God proposes but one: The Belief of a Fact. Strange Doctrine may one object! I own it is wonderful; but it is the best News ever an awakened Sinner heard. People are very curious to hear News in which they have no Manner of Concern. Here are News wherein every Individual of Mankind is concerned; for, upon the Belief, or Disbelief of this Fact, depends our eternal Happiness, or eternal Damnation. Neither need we say, Who shall go to Heaven, or descend to the Deep, to bring us this good News? For, whoever thou art that readest these Lines, The Word is nigh thee, in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart, even the Word of Faith, which the Apostles preached, **THAT IF THOU SHALT CONFESS WITH THY MOUTH THE LORD JESUS, AND SHALT BELIEVE IN THINE HEART, THAT GOD HATH RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD, THOU SHALT BE SAVED.**

There has been in all Ages of Christianity a great Work made about FAITH, what it is, and what are the Acts of it. And many trifling Teachers have given many intricate and perplexing Marks of saving Faith: But here is God's own Account of it; and whether shall I hearken to Men describing Faith in a confused Multiplicity of Words, or to God describing it in the most plain and easy Manner? I am persuaded, would Men expect less Benefit from Mens Sermons, who, it is much to be feared, know little of the Power of Godliness; and would Men employ more of their Time in a careful Perusal of the WORD of GOD, it would instruct them much sooner, and far better, in the Knowledge of CHRISTIANITY: For I dare be positive,

tive, where they hear one scriptural Discourse, they hear a great many which have no Foundation there.

This Truth of Christ's Death and Resurrection in the Room of guilty SINNERS, is everywhere insisted on in the Sermons of the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour; and no wonder, for this is indeed the GOSPEL, or the good News.

This Truth is exhibited to us in a great and most beautiful Variety of Lights to strike Men's Minds on all sides, but still it is the same Truth. Though sometimes we have the whole of Christianity expressed in one Verse, as in the above cited Passage, Rom. x. 9. The Belief of this Fact is called sometimes receiving the Testimony or Witness of God, receiving Christ, hearing him, looking to him; and many other such like Descriptions are given of saving Faith, but still it comes to the same Thing, and produces constantly the same Effects.

Now wherever the Spirit of God works this saving Faith, (for all the moral SUASION and Reasoning in the World cannot do it,) immediately the Conscience finds an Answer to all these perplexing Questions, wherewith perhaps the Person was almost distracted; such as, What must I do to be saved? The Gospel answers, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. But says the Man, I have been a Fornicator, an Adulterer; another says, I have been an Abuser of myself with Mankind; says a third, I have been a Thief; and others object, that they have been Drunkards, covetous, Revilers, Backbiters, disobedient to Parents, Gamesters, and so on.

I purposely divide these Persons into Classes, because it is but rarely perhaps those Crimes are to be met with in one Person; however, every Man's Conscience will one Day convict him, how many, or how few of these Sins he has been guilty of. Well, says the awakened Conscience, can I expect Mercy who have repeated these Sins over the Belly of Light,

Convictions, Warnings, Deliverances from imminent Dangers, and something like Illuminations of the Spirit of God?

The Word of God speaks personally to every Man and Woman, as if it named them by their Name and Sirname, therefore let no Man shift the Conviction.

But behold the Hope and Encouragement to the chief of Sinners, in what the Apostle says to the Corinthian Church! Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, 1 Cor. vi. 11.

No Man will have this Excuse in the Day of the Lord's second Coming (which is nearer at hand than most Men are aware of) that his Sins were of so heinous a Nature, that there was nothing like them in the Bible; for it were easy to shew any any Person all the Wickedness he hath been guilty of, in the Scriptures, either under general Designations, or particular Epithets; for which purpose see the Case of these mentioned, Eph. iv. 17, 18, 19. v. 11, 12, 13. also, Rom. i. 26. to the end. Mark vii. 20,—23. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Gal. v. 19,—21. 2 Tim. iii. 1,—5. and many other Places of Scripture. Yea, I am fully persuaded, that at the Day of Judgment, it will increase the Shame, Remorse, and Torment of ungodly Sinners prodigiously, to see these on the right Hand of the Judge, who were guilty of the very same Sins, for which they are condemned to everlasting Flames, and the never dying Worm. So true is that Word of God, He hath Mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth. And let Men object against this Doctrine until they are weary, they will never mend the Matter by replying against God. I never yet heard a stronger Objection than what the Apostle raises and repels, Rom. ix. 18,—24.

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But after all that has been said, it will no doubt be asked by some, What is the Meaning of all this canting Stuff and enthusiastick Nonsense? Have we not heard the same Threatnings over and over again, and yet no Man of Sense is moved by them? To these I shall only say at this Time, Were it not for such as they, Christianity would want one of the Demonstrations of its Truth; for these Scoffers are particularly described as coming in the last Days, with their Cavillings and the proper Answers to them, 2 Pet. iii. 3,—7. So that these Gentlemen are fulfilling these very Scriptures, which they pretend openly to despise, but secretly fear to be true.

To return to our Subject, We read but of one Sin under the Gospel that is unpardonable, and that is the Sin against the holy Spirit. It is most evident to any one that carefully reads the new Testament, that every Thing which is good, holy, or praise-worthy in any Man, is expressly assigned to the holy Spirit, as the immediate efficient Cause and Operator of it. Yet, as a learned Author justly takes notice, “There is
“an open and horrible Opposition made unto the
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“Name of the Spirit is grown to be a Reproach, nor
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“still so to do. But such was his Entertainment in
“the World upon his first Effusion, Acts ii. 13.”

Thus far my Author of the last Century. I may add the Case is not altered for the better at this Day, and it may be considered, what Occasion these covered Deists, the Quakers, have given to this profane Mockery.

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Whatever great Guilt and Opposition to the Spirit of all Grace be in this, it doth not appear to be the unpardonable Sin : But this Sin is plainly described, Heb. vi. 4,—8. 2 Pet. ii. 20 to the end. 1 John iii. 12. v. 16. Luke xi. 24, 25, 26. and many other Places.

From all which it appears, that Apostates from the holy Profession of Christianity, have great Reason to examine themselves upon this Point, especially if their Apostacy be joined with malicious Persecution of these who were once their Brethren. Let all Professors then take heed.

Now wherever the Faith of Christ is wrought in a Soul, it must discover itself by Charity or Love, which is the same Word in the Greek Language. And I cannot conceive, how Men can satisfy themselves that they are believing the Gospel upon Scripture grounds, if they are not evidencing their Faith by their Works, especially the Works of brotherly Love. Nor can I well see, how brotherly Love can be exercised, where there is not a Brotherhood.

This Charity or brotherly Love is spoken of throughout the whole new Testament, and is particularly described and distinguished from all false Pretensions to it, 1 Cor. xiii. chap. and throughout the whole first Epistle of John, the Design of which Epistle the Author thereof declares, chap. v. 13. These Things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal Life, and that ye may believe on the Name of the Son of God.

As my Design of writing is to recommend the Study of the holy Scriptures, that Men may see how they have been corrupted by perverse Interpretations, I think it best that they read these Passages themselves. Men have not this Excuse now, that the Eunuch had, for not understanding the Bible. Acts viii. 30, 31. When Philip heard him reading the Prophet
Esaïas,

Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? The Eunuch answered, How can I, except some Man should guide me? For we must advert, That the New Testament was not then written. Now it is agreed, that the New Testament is the only sure Guide to explain, and open up the Old. And this I take to be the Meaning of our Lord's Words, Matth. xiii. 51, 52. Jesus saith to his Disciples after he had been instructing them in the Nature of his Kingdom, Have ye understood all these Things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. Then said he unto them, Therefore every Scribe which is instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven, is like unto a Man that is an Householder, who bringeth forth out of his Treasure Things new and old.

Accordingly, we find Peter who was one of the Scribes instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven, so soon as the Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost, beginning his Sermon with an Explication of the Old Testament Prophecies, and applying them to JESUS CHRIST. And this Method was followed by the Apostle Paul, and all the rest of the Apostles. And now that the whole of the Apostolick Doctrine is committed to Writing, all Interpretations of the Old Testament which do not agree with the New, must be rejected as private Interpretations, though all the Clergymen on Earth should concur in imposing them upon us: For, as the same Apostle Peter says, 2 Pet. i. 20, 21. No Prophecy of the Scripture is of any private Interpretation, for the Prophecy came not in old Time by the Will of Man, but holy Men of GOD spake, moved by the holy Ghost.

By the bye, We may hence see, what Foundation these People go upon, who apply the Old Testament Prophecies to the Nation of Scotland, and tell us that this Land is married to the Lord; that this Nation comes now in the Room of the Nation of Israel. Who told them all this? I am sure there is nothing like

like it in all the New Testament, and if it were true, it would never have been omitted there. But it is false and groundless. What Right, pray, has Scotland as a Nation to this high Pretension more than England, France, or Holland? I believe the Lord hath his own People in all these Nations, and we are assured, That the Redeemed to God by the Blood of the Lamb, are chosen out of every Kindred, and Tongue, and People, and Nation, Rev. v. 9. But a Nation of this World in Covenant with God under the New Testament, is a Contradiction to the whole Scope of it; and is plainly contrary to the Apostle's whole Reasoning, Heb. viii. chap.

The People of God are always represented under the New Testament, as a People hated by the World. Now can a Nation of this World hate itself?

What monstrous Absurdities and Inconsistencies do Men fall into, by departing from the plain and easy Scripture Rule! This leads me now to speak some Things concerning the National Church of Scotland.

A Church that pretends to give out Laws in the Name of Christ, whose Clergy pray for themselves as Zion, Jerusalem, the Church of Christ, and many such Titles as are only applicable to the true Church, would need to have very clear Vouchers for all this.

Now where would any Man reasonably expect these Vouchers to be found, but in the New Testament, where we have every Thing relating to the Model, Doctrine, Worship, and Government of the Churches of Christ?

Let us try a little then how well these Pretensions are founded in the New Testament.

The first Church we read of there is Acts ii. chap. where we find three thousand Souls converted to the Faith of Jesus Christ by Peter's Sermon, wherein he had born home a Conviction upon them, That this same JESUS whom they had taken by wicked Hands, cruci-

crucified and slain, was raised by God from the dead, and made both LORD and CHRIST.

These then were Believers in Christ, who had been pricked to the Heart, and made to cry out, What shall we do? Peter, you see, immediately exhorts them to Separation from the rest of the Jewish Nation; saying, Save yourselves from this untoward Generation. An Exhortation absolutely necessary in all Ages of Christianity till the second Coming of Christ. They hereupon were baptized, and continued stedfastly in the Apostles Doctrine, and in Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayer.

Here then was a Church of Jesus Christ, separated from the rest of their Country-men, observing all Things whatsoever Christ and his Apostles commanded.

Here is a noble Pattern for all Churches in after Ages: viz. The Church in Jerusalem brought into Church Order by the twelve Apostles of the Lamb; and there can be no Church of Jesus Christ, but what is built on the same Foundation.

We read afterwards, that the Number of them that heard the Word and believed was about five Thousand, Acts iv. 4. In the same chap. ver. 31. we find them all assembling together in one Place for Prayer. Again, we find them all with one Accord in Solomon's Porch, chap. v. 12.

Is it not then a most barefaced Piece of Impudence in any pretended Minister of the Gospel, to assert before a publick Auditory, That it was impossible for such Numbers to assemble together in one Place; after the inspired Historian assures us, they did? But, this is but one Instance of many, where the Clergy have contradicted the Apostles.

We read in the sixth chap. That the Apostles called this Church together, which is there called the Multitude of the Disciples, and said unto them, Brethren, Look ye out among you seven Men of honest

nest Report, full of the holy Ghost and Wisdom.—And the Saying pleased the whole Multitude, and they chose, &c. This is then the first Election of Deacons. Let any Man that will allow himself to think, compare this with the present Method of electing Members of Kirk-sessions, and the Characters of the Persons so elected, and if he can observe no Difference, I shall say no more about it.

Next we find a great Persecution, chap. viii. raised against this Church, which served in the holy and wise Providence of God, to the spreading of the Gospel through Judea and Samaria; and as we read chap. xi. 19. as far as Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch; at which last Place, the Hand of the Lord was with them, and a great Number believed, and were turned to the Lord. The Church at Jerusalem hearing this good News, sent forth Barnabas that he should go as far as Antioch, who when he came, and had seen the Grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with Purpose of Heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good Man, and full of the HOLY GHOST and of Faith, and much People was added to the Lord. Next we find him bringing Saul (afterwards called Paul) to Antioch, and so we find these two assembling themselves a whole Year in the Church, and teaching much People. It was here then the famous Name CHRISTIAN began. The Disciples were called CHRISTIANS first at Antioch, Men in whom Barnabas could see the Grace of God, such as believed and were turned to the Lord. This was the first Gentile Church gathered out of the Nations; for the same Word signifies Gentiles, or Nations, and is translated indifferently.

The famous Church in the City of Ephesus consisted at first only of twelve Members, as is evident Acts xix. 7. When they increased in Number, we have their Character, Eph. i. 1. Paul an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the Will of God, to the Saints which
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are at Ephesus, and to the Faithful in Christ Jesus. That the whole City of Ephesus were not Members of the Church, appears from the whole of that Epistle, especially the fifth Chapter, where the Apostle describes their Neighbours as very debauched People. We need only read the Beginning of each Epistle, to know the Characters of the Persons who composed the first Churches. Thus, Rom. i. 7. To all that be at Rome, beloved of God, called Saints. Phil. i. 1. To all the Saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the Bishops and Deacons; where we see how many Orders of Office-bearers there were in the first Churches. Colos. i. 2. To the Saints and faithful Brethren in Christ, which are in Colosse. 2 Thes. i. 1. Unto the Church of the Thessalonians in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

These then were not National Churches, but Churches in Cities.

It has been often pleaded, that there were a great many wrong Things in the Church of Corinth; Who denies it? Yea, the very Design of the Apostle's writing to them, was to rectify the Abuses that were among them. Though it is evidently a wrong Translation to say, 1 Cor. xi. 21. One is hungry, and another is drunken. For any one who can read the New Testament in the Language it was first written in, will see, that it is the same Word which is translated John ii. 10. And when Men have well drunk. The Word signifies, well refreshed, while Men have kept within Bounds. And unless we will suppose our Lord working a Miracle to encourage Drunkenness, (which would be highly blasphemous,) we cannot charge the Corinthians with it neither. The Sense of that Passage in the Corinthians seems plainly to be this. The Apostle reproves the Members of that Church, for eating their *Agapæ* or Love-feasts aside from their poor Brethren, for whose Sakes it was chiefly designed, and exhorts them to eat them at home, and to

let their poor Brethren partake with them : He also carefully distinguishes betwixt the *Agapæ*, and the Lord's Supper, which he immediately afterwards insists on. This has given occasion to Men to bring the Church of Corinth as an Example for continuing in the Communion of an impure Church, with what good Reason I leave the Reader to judge. I would only ask, If these Men can in their Consciences apply to their Church the Character which the Apostle Paul gives to the Church of Corinth? 1 Cor. i. 2. Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called Saints. The Apostles of Jesus Christ were Strangers to the Distinction which crept in afterwards, betwixt Christians and Saints; though now SAINT is a Term of Reproach, while a Man would take it very ill, not to be called a Christian.

Let us now take a View of the Church of Scotland, as we observe it ourselves, for it is needless to go to Books of Controversy while we have a SURE RULE to walk by, and our Eyes in our Heads to see who are walking by that Rule. And if here I should say Things which may give Offence, the only Apology I can make is, that if they are true, they need none, and if they are not, no Apology can atone for writing Lies. In the first Place, Do not your own Ministers in their practical Improvements of Sermons, usually distinguish their Congregations into two Classes or Sorts of Men, Believers and Unbelievers? And do they not say, That they have Ground to fear the Unbelievers make up the far greatest Part of the Congregation? Yet, all these People are Members of the Church, or else I know not what they are. Now where do we read in the New Testament of an Apostle addressing a Church in this Manner?

I would next desire the People to read the Characters of a Bishop, Elder, Overseer, or Presbyter (for these are all Names to one and the same Office, as
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any one that understands Greek may soon be convinced) I say, let them consider these Characters as you have them in the Word of God, by which we must all in a short Time be judged; such as, 1 Tim. i. chap. from the Beginning to the 8th ver. Titus i. 5,——9. Acts xx. 28. and then let them compare their own Teachers with these Characters, and I dare say, they may very well pay back the Compliment to them, and tell them, they have Ground from the Word of God to fear, that the most Part of them are not the Bishops or Presbyters spoken of there.

But it is no Wonder, for a National Church of Jesus Christ is a Contradiction in Terms.

By the bye, we find in the Church of Ephesus there were more Bishops than one in one City, as appears plain from the xx. chap. of the Acts; for these very Elders of the Church of Ephesus, whom the Apostle sent for to Miletus ver. 17. are called Bishops in the 28. ver. for so it should have been translated, had it not been for Fear of offending the Bishops in England at the Time of the Translation.

From the whole of what has been said, I could defy any Man to shew me in the New Testament a Warrant for a National Church; there are no Churches spoken of there as Churches of Christ, but the general Assembly and Church of the First-born, which are written in Heaven, gathered out of all Nations, Kindreds, Tongues, and People; and then, Representations of that one catholick CHURCH in particular Churches of Saints, walking together in brotherly Love, and observing all Things whatsoever their Lord Jesus Christ hath commanded, continuing stedfastly in the Apostles Doctrine and Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayer. Such a Church with its Presbytery, is in its Discipline subject to no Jurisdiction under Heaven; neither can such a Church interfere with the civil Magistrate's

Power : For Christ's Kingdom is not of this World. And the Precepts of Christianity with Respect to Subjection to the Powers that be, will make every Member of such Churches quiet and peaceable Subjects, abhorring all Insurrections against the State, under any Pretext whatsoever.

Moreover, they are as living Stones built upon the Foundation of the Doctrine of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-Stone, in whom the whole Building fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy TEMPLE in the LORD: Such was the Church in the City of Ephesus, who were builded for an Habitation of GOD through the SPIRIT, Eph. ii. 20. to the End. It is objected to this, That these Things were in the Infancy of the Churches. To this I answer, They were not indeed then grown up to the Stature of that MONSTER, the MAN of SIN, which did not come to a full Growth till more than four Hundred Years afterwards; but as true it is, that they were all coming in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a PERFECT MAN, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ. It is then the Duty of these who would not be as Children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, by the Slight of Men, and cunning Craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive, to come out of the Antichristian Societies, and join themselves to the Churches of Christ. And it is the indispensable Duty of these who are in the Churches, to be Followers of God as dear Children, walking in LOVE, keeping Consciences void of Offence toward God, and toward Men.

It is to such Churches as these, the whole New Testament-Revelation is given; for their Use it was designed; so that I am no-ways surprized to hear Men say, the Revelation is a dark Book, for in the last chap. 16. ver. our Lord says, I JESUS have sent mine

mine Angel to testify unto you these Things in the Churches. And it is to them, that he appears immediately before his second Coming, as the BRIGHT and MORNING STAR.

But how must these Churches do when corrupt Teachers come in among them from among themselves? The Apostle Paul in his farewell Speech to the Ephesian Bishops tells us, how they were to behave in this Case, which he likewise foretells would certainly happen; he does not indeed advise them to call a classical Presbytery, nor a Synod, or National Assembly, that they might condemn these false Apostles, neither doth he bid them apply to the civil Magistrate to stop the Mouths of these Gainsayers; but he says, And now Brethren, I commend you to GOD, and to the WORD of his GRACE, which is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among all them which are sanctified, Acts xx. 32. And so we find that Church commended for complying with the Apostolick Exhortation, Rev. ii. 2. Thou hast tried them which say they are Apostles and are not, and hast found them LIARS.

And these Churches will always be exposed to the Hatred and Contempt of the World, if they are faithful to Christ, and bold in the Profession of his Name; for let the World love a Man upon other Accounts as they please, they will never love a Man for being a Christian. CHRIST was the BUTT of the Devil's Malice from the Beginning, and all his faithful Disciples are forewarned by him to lay their account with the same Treatment he met with; and it well becomes them to follow the Captain of their Salvation who was made perfect thro' Sufferings: Little do the World consider when they are persecuting the People of God, that they are thereby making them meet for Glory, and themselves for utter Destruction and Perdition. It were an endless Task to shew all the Instances, wherein all National Churches

Churches have departed from the Pattern shown in the New Testament.

The Advocates for the Church of Scotland maintain, that it is pure in its Doctrine, Worship, and Government, all which I deny.

The Doctrine preached in the Church of Scotland must be the Rule and Standard of our Judgment in this Affair; for it is no Matter though the Confession of Faith should be allowed to be found in doctrinal Points, if these who pretend to be Teachers of Christianity, can be proved to be Perverters of the Doctrines contain'd in the Scriptures, which are the only infallible Touchstone of all Doctrines.

That they are so, might be made appear in many Instances. Not to mention these who go upon the Shaftsburian Scheme, and neglect the very Basis of Christianity, I mean the justifying Righteousness of Jesus Christ, it is to be feared that these who are commonly thought Orthodox, are not so very tight upon that Point as could be wish'd: For, what do they mean by these Mints and Endeavours, which must be put forth by us in coming to Christ, these Frames and Dispositions of Heart which we must find about us, or wrought in us? I take all this to be a Self-righteous Labour, seeking to establish a Righteousness of our own, not considering, that what must save us (if ever we be saved) is something entirely without us, even the perfect Obedience and Sufferings of Jesus Christ, which he finished on the Cross, when he bowed his Head, and gave up the Ghost. Do not we frequently hear Directions of this kind, "If you could stretch forth the withered Hand like the Man in the Gospel." Now they mistake that Passage, who imagine that the Man's stretching forth his Hand was a Preparative to his Cure; for it was as impossible for the Man to stretch forth his Hand, as it was for Lazarus to arise out of the Grave, until the Lord Jesus commanded them both, and in the very Moment

ment put forth his almighty Power effecting that which he commanded. Thus it is with withered dead Sinners, we can do every Thing to destroy ourselves, but nothing to help ourselves, and it is as absurd to exhort Men who are dead in Trespasses and Sins, to put forth Desires or Endeavours, or Mints, in order to their Coming to Christ, as it would be, to exhort a dead Corpse to try Endeavours to arise and walk. The Gospel commands us to believe, that all that is necessary for our Salvation is done already, and the whole Obedience of the Gospel is only a Tribute of Praise to Jesus Christ for what he hath done. When we look into the Sermons of Christ and his Apostles, we find the Doctrines of Self-denial, patient Bearing of the Cross, and Alms-giving much insisted on, as the very first Lessons of Christianity. Again, we find Men every where cautioning against Covetousness, laying up Treasures on Earth, loving the World, or the Things in the World. We are told, That the Friendship of the World is Enmity with God. Whosoever therefore will be a Friend of the World, is the Enemy of God, Jam. iv. 4.

But when do we hear these Truths of God insisted on, and pressed home upon the Conscience in the Church of Scotland? When do we hear Ministers dissuading their Hearers from laying up Treasures on Earth? Do they not rather imitate their Predecessors the Pharisees, in deriding our Lord's Doctrine about Covetousness? Do they not lead the Van in an eager Pursuit of the good Things (as they call them) of this Life? What Foundation have they in the New Testament for taking Stipends from these who are not Members of their Church, and do not submit to their Ministry?

But the Falsity and Weakness of their Arguments on this Head, are most clearly shown by Mr. John Milton in his Book entituled, Considerations touching the likeliest Means to remove Hirelings out of the

the Church, reprinted at Edinburgh in the Year 1736. to which it is needless to add. And I acknowledge, I have so little Charity for most Clergy-men, that I believe, a good fat Stipend has more weight with them, than any Arguments that can be produced from the Word of GOD. So true is the Character of these Teachers which the Spirit of God describes in the Scripture; for which Purpose read Matth. vii. 15,—21. John x. 10,—13. Acts xx. 29, 30. Rom. xvi. 17, 18. 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2, 3. I might produce many more Scriptures, wherein our present Rabbies might see themselves as in a Mirror, but these shall suffice at the Time.

Neither is it any Answer to this, to say, That there are still good and godly Men in the Church of Scotland; for the same Thing may be affirmed of the Church of England, yea, of the Church of Rome; so that if it is not a good Argument in the one Case, neither is it in the other.

As I design no Reflections on any particular Clergy-man, so I know none will take any Thing I have said amiss, but these who know in their own Consciences they are guilty; so that if they are offended, the Rule is, Let them alone: They be blind Leaders of the blind, and if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the Ditch, Matth. xv. 14.

I proceed now to consider the Worship of the Church of Scotland, and here I observe plain Omissions of the instituted Worship under the New Testament.

The best Directory for Worship and Government, is certainly the Practice of the first Christian Churches, and the more I look into Directories for Worship, Confessions of Faith, Catechisms, Books of Discipline, Liturgies, Books of common Prayer, and all these Contrivances of Clergy-men, for modelling the Church of Christ, and its Doctrine, Worship, Government, and Discipline, the more useless and pernicious

nicious I see them to be. The Scriptures are plainer, purer, and more suited to a vulgar Capacity, than any of these trifling Compoſures.

Now we find the first Christians assembled together on the first Day of the Week, to break Bread in the Lord's Supper: So that the same Example gives Authority to our partaking of that Ordinance every first Day of the Week, which authorises our keeping the Lord's Day. Yet we find the Ministers of the Church of Scotland assembling every Lord's Day with their Parishes for Preaching, and only once in the Year, perhaps once in two Years, for the Lord's Supper; and truly the seldomer, the better; as shall be made appear afterwards.

2dly, There is another gross Omission of the New Testament Worship in the Church of Scotland, contrary even to their own Books of Discipline, Book I. Chap. xi. Sect. 6. and that is, The not-reading of the Holy Scriptures in Publick. I own indeed the Shorter Catechism seems to give some Countenance to this Neglect, when it says, "The Spirit of God maketh the Reading, but especially the Preaching of the Word, an effectual Mean of convincing and converting Sinners," &c.

But I could never yet hear any of their Discourses, that were worthy to be compared with the Sermons of Christ and his Apostles; tho' I have been entertained with their Preachings for Hours together; whereas the Scriptures are never read, but only a small Portion for a Lecture, and a Verse or two for a Sermon. Thus they make the Practice of the primitive Christians of none Effect through their Traditions.

There is another Ordinance of the Gospel, so much neglected in the Church of Scotland, that I very much doubt, if many of their Professors know it to be a Duty, and that is, the Fellowship or Communion. We see the Church of Jerusalem continued

nued stedfastly in this Ordinance, as well as the rest of the Institutions.

Will any Man after this assert, That the Worship of the Church of Scotland is pure, when so many essential Parts of the New Testament Worship are quite neglected?

And here, once for all, I desire it may be noticed, that I make no Difference betwixt the Church of Scotland and the SECEDERS. I know their whole Affair from the Beginning of it, and I always was of the Opinion, That they are a Party of this WORLD, grasping at the POWER of persecuting these who differ from them; so that I would like as ill to be under their Government in the Church, as under a Jacobite Government in the State, both which I abhor.

The Discipline and Government of the Church of Scotland is such a Medley of Confusion, and such a burlesque Imitation of the civil Courts, as has very justly exposed their Judicatures to the Ridicule of all thinking Men. We see in Matth. xviii. 15,—20. how a Church of Jesus Christ is to behave in the Affair of Offences, and how every private Member is to deal with a trespassing Brother: But to practise this in the Church of Scotland would be an arduous Task indeed! I am afraid if a Member of that Church should seriously set himself to deal with every Brother that he sees trampling on the Laws of Christ, he would have little Time for any Thing else; so justly is Antichrist called BABYLON or Confusion.

I know there have been Attempts made for purging the Communicants, even in Towns, by bringing Lists of them, who wanted Tokens, to be laid before the Kirk-session. But when particular Persons came to be named, as guilty of Immoralities, the Session could not agree about Debaring them; and no Wonder, for, in excluding them, they would have tacitly acknowledged, that they themselves deserved the same

same Treatment, seeing it is notourly known, that Members of Kirk-sessions are guilty of the same Crimes with private Parishioners. I do think, if Purgation was in earnest design'd, it should always begin at the Clergy; for I am persuaded very few even of them have any Right to that Ordinance.

Neither could I ever see any Sincerity or Consistency in that Form in the Church of SCOTLAND, of Fencing the Tables: For they cannot possibly be ignorant, that they have given Tokens to Men of these very Characters, which they excommunicate in their Speech before the Sacrament. And I have thought it a most shocking Thing to see Men of the most abandon'd Characters sitting at the Lord's Table, yea such as bare a mortal Grudge at each other. So that, whatever solemn Discourses are made upon these Occasions, I can look upon the whole of that Ceremony as nothing but a solemn MOCKING of GOD. Are not many admitted, who are utter Strangers to the Profession or Practice of Christianity? What Profession do they make, and what are the Qualifications desired by their Ministers? None, but answering a few Questions perhaps out of the Catechisms, or some such Things as a Child can repeat by Rote. They never appear to have been prick'd to the Heart for Sin, nor taught of GOD to believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST. And so it is seen in their Practice; for, except for a few Days before and after the SACRAMENT, I defy the most quick-sighted Observer to know any Difference betwixt the Bulk of the COMMUNICANTS and the rest of the Congregation. However then Ministers may doctrinally debar such Persons, yet while they practically admit them, these People must think, their Teachers have a better Opinion of them than they pretend, and so their Practice contradicting their DOCTRINE, the whole Design of it must necessarily be defeated, while Men are the more hardened in their Atheism and Wickedness. I need add

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nothing about Baptism, seeing if they are lax in admitting to the Lord's Supper, they go beyond all Bounds of Decency in admitting to Baptism.

Again, Why is the whole Fury of their Discipline spent upon prosecuting unclean Persons? I am far from thinking that Fornication or Adultery are venial Sins; for the New Testament assures me, that they exclude from the Kingdom of Heaven: But do not Covetousness, Extortion, Drunkenness, and all the other Works of the Flesh the same? Is a covetous Wretch, who hath scrap'd together Riches thro' Unmercifulness to the Poor, and cheating the Government of their Tribute, I say, is such a Person less guilty in the Sight of God than a Fornicator or an Adulterer? I am sure he is not. But such a Man is an useful Member of civil Society. So he may be, but a Christian he is not. How often do we hear Folk saying, He is an honest Man, but very narrow, and cannot part with his Money to the Poor? Would it not be as agreeable to the Word of God to say, He is an honest Man, but keeps a Whore? But it is needless to rake any more into the Corruptions of Antichrist. Every Man's Observation will furnish him with Abundance of Instances. And the Call of God to all his People at this Day is, COME OUT of her, my PEOPLE, that ye be not Partakers of her Sins, and that ye receive not of her Plagues, Rev. xviii. 4.

A Short ADDRESS to the MODERN DEISTS.

GENTLEMEN,

IF it might not be thought Presumption in me to offer any Thing to the Consideration of Persons of your Knowledge, I would speak some few Things to you likewise: But as I cannot pretend to know what Lengths your Scheme is come yet, or whether indeed
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ye have any regular Scheme of Principles at all, I shall only ask a few Questions for my Information.

I. Are ye all unanimously agreed, That that Part of you which thinks (for I must not call it a Soul) is nothing else but a little Wind or Vapour, which dies immediately with the Body? If it is not, What certain Proofs do ye bring, that your Punishment shall not be eternal; for I scarce think ye expect a Reward?

II. Do ye all firmly believe, that there never was such a Person as JESUS CHRIST? Particularly, can ye prove, that there did not live, in the Reign of Tiberius and his Successors, such Men as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, who have transmitted to us the History of his Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension? If so, then pray inform me, at what Time this Book, called the New Testament, was written, and by whom?

III. Do ye think it reasonable, and agreeable to the Rules of Prudence in other Matters, to remain indifferent as to these Things upon which your eternal Condition depends?

IV. Doth it never raise a Suspicion of the Weakness and Wickedness of your Cause, when you hear of the Death of any of your Comrades dying in Anguish and Despair? What is it that affrights them at that Time? Cannot a Reflection on their past Life give them Ease and Quiet of Mind? I always think, that it is the best Religion which gives a Man Joy and Peace in the near Prospect of Death. I have been acquainted with Deists, Men of more true Wit and Learning, than any of that Way I know of now, who had quite different Sentiments in the near View of Death, and would have given all
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the World for an Opportunity to shew their Repentance of their past Life.

What is it, that makes their Courage fail, when they stand most in need of it?

I have known Christians again, who looked Death in the Face with undaunted Courage. What was it that encouraged these People? Not indeed any Confidence in themselves, but in what Jesus Christ hath done for Sinners; so that some of them have died blessing God, who had determined them to trust him, and others singing at their last Gasp, O Death where is thy Sting?

Facts are very stubborn Things, and will not yield to vain Reasoning. I know all this is ascribed, on the one Hand, to Cowardice, and, on the other, to Enthusiasm, but happy were it for us all to be thus enthusiastick!

V. How come ye to a Certainty, that God never revealed himself to any of his Creatures in an extraordinary Way? How comes it to pass, that the Jews to this Day remain a distinct People from all other Nations on the Face of the Earth?

Why do these People remain as living Witnesses to the Truth of a Revelation, which they pretend came from God, though at the same Time they reject him, for whose Sake that Revelation was given them? What Author since the earliest Records of Time has proved the Jews to have been Impostors, in pretending to have received an immediate Revelation from God?

VI. Whence is it, that the Things foretold in the Scriptures have fallen out exactly as they were predicted, though often a great Distance of Time intervene'd betwixt the Prophecy and the Accomplishment, as is evident to any one versant in History?

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The Christian Religion is consistent with itself, and easily accounts for this. Thus Jesus Christ tells the Jews, The Scriptures cannot be broken: He tells his Disciples, when he was prophesying the Destruction of Jerusalem, and the End of the World, with the preceding Signs of his second Coming, Matth. xxiv. 35. Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but my Words shall not pass away. Jerusalem was destroyed as he foretold. Antichrist came to his Throne as the Apostles and Prophets foretold. He is now in a Consumption by the Spirit of Christ's Mouth, and what remains now, but that he shall be destroyed with the Brightness of his Coming? And as sure as Jerusalem was overthrown by a most bloody and tragical Destruction, so sure shall we see this World and all the Works thereof burnt up. And every Christian ought to lift up his Head for Joy, for his Redemption draweth nigh. The Signs of Christ's second Coming are visibly fulfilling at this Day. No doubt there were as pretty ingenious Gentlemen in Noah's Days as there are now. How ridiculous must it have appeared to them, to see a Man building a Vessel for sailing, to provide against a Flood? How would they laugh at him, when they saw him so anxious, 120 Years before it happened, preparing against (what would appear to them) an imaginary Danger? The World was as secure and unconcerned then as it is now. They did eat, they drank, they married Wives, and were given in Marriage, until the very Day that Noah entered into the Ark, and the Flood came and destroyed them all. So shall the Coming of the Son of Man be, Matth xxiv. 38, 39. Luke xvii. 26, 27.

Thus likewise was it with Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Cities which God destroyed with them. When Lot told his Sons in Law the very Night before it happened, that the Lord would destroy that City, he seemed to them as one that mocked. They would,

would, no doubt, think their Father in Law was grown delirious : And when they saw the Sun rise next Morning as usual, and every Body employed as they were wont to be, they would be ready to ask at Lot, What was become of his Threatnings now? But what a terrible Surprise was it, when, all of a sudden, the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah Brimstone and Fire from the Lord out of Heaven, and overthrew these Cities, and all the Plain, and all the Inhabitants of the Cities, and that which grew upon the Ground. **EVEN THUS** it shall be in the Day, when the **SON of MAN** is revealed, Luke xvii. 30.

Now the Apostle Peter tells us, That God, turning the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into Ashes, condemned them with an Overthrow, making them an Ensam ple unto these, that after should live ungodly. So says the Apostle Jude, Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Cities about them, giving themselves over to Fornication, and going after strange Flesh, are set forth for an Example, suffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire, 2 Pet. ii. 6. Jude vii.

And to conclude, Our blessed Lord, who is the faithful Witness, tells his Disciples, Matth. x. 14, 15. Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your Words, when ye depart out of that House or City, shake off the Dust of your Feet: Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the Land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for that City.

THE END.



